

Dear FCC,

I am writing to you with respect to docket 87-268. I want to let you know that I think the initiative to force HDTV or Digital Television on the consumer has not been thought through well. I am talking about the digital wide-screen format that you have forced companies and advertisers to broadcast in.

The widescreen format has decreased the value of my television viewing. It was so egregious that I had to replace my 20" TV set with a 27" set because the pictures were so small (Some of the movies I watched on Turner Classic Movies with the 20" set were about half the screen size). This new TV and stand cost me around \$800. In the future, you'll force me to buy a widescreen TV! Is digital TV really worth that kind of up front investment, not to mention the cost of the equipment for it once it gets here? I have serious doubts. The FCC has effectively raised my cost of watching the same programs I used to watch (by forcing me to buy a bigger TV) and at the same time has decreased my utility because the widescreen format on current TV's is obtrusive and reduces the height of the picture. This is as backward as you can get.

Digital TV offers me little benefit. Most of the programs I watch are news, information, and sitcoms. Seeing these in widescreen is irrelevant to me. Also, I have seen HDTV in the stores and it actually is way too sharp for my liking. It is totally unrealistic because no one has the kind of clarity of sight that HDTV provides. It's actually kind of scary.

I think that the federal govt. has blown it in a big way. It essentially is force-feeding something onto the public that it may in fact not want. Digital TV has been pushed by govt. staffers, academics, and certain hardware vendors. I don't see any overwhelming or hard evidence at all that consumers want it. The vast majority of people I know don't have it (where it is available) and have not indicated they want it. The only people it really seems to benefit are those who watch a lot of movies and are movie buffs. To them I say: "Go rent a DVD", if it's that important. And if it's really that important, go buy a widescreen TV too.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not anti-technology; I have worked for many years in software hi-tech. It's just that I do not see any real benefit to me with Digital TV/HDTV. I am satisfied with the current TV aspect ratio and, in fact, I am not comfortable viewing the widescreen format when I see it in the stores. I do not watch programs shot in widescreen and flip away from commercials that are in widescreen format too. This is hurting advertisers' exposure of their commercials.

You have degraded my television viewing experience as a result of shows and commercials being in widescreen format and have increased my cost of viewing. I don't even watch movies on Turner Classic Movies anymore because they mostly show widescreen format. I guess that's their prerogative. But I will tell you that because of this the level of service and choice has been diminished for me.

I think you need to step back and do some market research with the public to really assess whether what you're doing is correct. And you need to ask the right questions. Don't ask questions that are going to lead you automatically to conclude what you're doing is correct. Here are some sample questions:

- 1) How important is a clearer picture to you than you already have?
- 2) How important is it to see more of what's at the edge of the picture.

3) Do you think widescreen format would improve your viewing utility (satisfaction) of the following types of programs due to seeing more at the edge of the screen?:

- a) News
- b) Information
- c) Sitcoms
- d) Lifestyle programs
- e) Movies

3a) Do you think a CLEARER IMAGE would improve your viewing utility of the following types of programs:

- a) News
- b) Information
- c) Sitcoms
- d) Lifestyle programs
- e) Movies

If yes to 3 or 3a, what is your willingness to pay for these features?

4) Are you interested in the interactive TV aspects of digital TV? If yes, would you still be interested in it if your television viewing habits and interactive choices were tracked, stored, and used by companies for marketing purposes?

These are just some of the questions I can think of off the top of my head. I am sure there are many others that should be "value" and "cost" oriented in nature.

Honestly, it is time to step back and stop this juggernaut toward mandating TVs have digital equipment and forcing broadcasters to broadcast in widescreen format. I would recommend that you allow broadcasters to stop broadcasting now in this format if they so desire.

Here are my final statements:

You are ruining my TV viewing experience.

You have already increased my cost due to my needing to get a bigger TV.

You are going to increase my cost of viewing TV in the future with no appreciable benefits (but definitely degradation of viewing satisfaction).

You will not be adding any value to me by forcing me to get a widescreen TV in the future to view digital TV.

I don't care about interactive TV.

I don't want to see super granularity of someone's facial wrinkles or pimples. (I don't see them in real life and I don't want to see them on TV).

I hope this letter from "joe citizen" will give you pause to reflect on the damage you are doing to my, and others' (I am sure) viewing satisfaction.

Regards,

DG